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THREAT?

By the Editor

The Soviet Union, with the full approval of the German Democratic Republic, has made new proposals to overcome the deadlock in the German problem, and in particular the problem of Berlin.

The new proposals were generally described in the big-business press of the western world as a threat to the people of West Berlin, and western politicians began to rattle their sabres and to shout "We shall stand firm at all costs".

What in fact were the new proposals, and whom do they threaten?

The Soviet Government pointed out in its notes, dispatched on November 27th, that two independent and sovereign German states had grown up in the course of the 13 years which have followed the end of World War Two.

This fact makes the continuation of any form of occupation anachronistic, and in fact occupation has really ceased, with the exception of Berlin.

British, American and French troops came to Berlin at the end of the war under inter-allied agreements which foresaw that they would stay in Berlin for a limited period while Germany was demilitarised and democratised, and while a new united German state was born.

Western policy frustrated the Potsdam policy of demilitarisation and denazification, and there is therefore no justification for the western troops to remain any longer in West Berlin.

The Soviet notes pointed out that the easiest way of solving the Berlin problem would be for West Berlin to be incorporated in the German Democratic Republic, of which the whole city really forms an integral part, but admitted that under present conditions this would be very difficult since political and economic developments in West Berlin had been very different from those in the German Democratic Republic.

The Soviet Union therefore made the thoroughly realistic proposal that West Berlin should receive a very special status: it should become a demilitarised free city. This West Berlin Free City should be completely independent of the two existing German states, and of all foreign states, and its independence could be guaranteed by the Four Powers and be the United Nations.

The advantages of this step would be that the occupation regime would be ended, West Berlin would cease to be a centre for espionage against the German Democratic Republic, and one of the most dangerous centres of international tension would be removed.

The Soviet proposal for the solution of the Berlin problem may not be ideal: it is up to the western powers to propose a better solution if they know one.

But we must ask the big-business press and the sabre-rattling politicians a question: WHERE IS THE THREAT?

"West Berlin would be left as an isolated capitalist island in a socialist sea" say the western newspapers. But that is exactly its position today.

"If the western troops were withdrawn, West Berlin could be overrun in an hour or two by troops from the surrounding German Democratic Republic" say the western papers. But that is exactly the position today. All military experts in all parts of the world are agreed that the few thousand western troops in West Berlin would make no difference at all if the Soviet Union wished to launch a war, which it most certainly does not.

In fact, the integrity of West Berlin from a military point of view would be improved if the Soviet plan were carried out, since the West Berlin Free State would be guaranteed not only by the Big Four, but also by the full force of the United Nations Organisation.

But of course the Berlin question is only one small part of the question of Germany as a whole. If all foreign troops leave Berlin, will this not provide a good example for all foreign troops to leave the whole of Germany?

If West Berlin can be turned successfully into a demilitarised, neutral state, trading and co-existing with East and West, will this not provide a good example which could lead to the establishment of a neutralised German Confederation?

The Soviet Union has proposed a six-month period of consideration during which the Berlin problem can be settled.

If these six months are used properly by all people of goodwill, they may take us a long step along the road to a final solution of the German problem, and a long step towards a real relaxation of tension in Europe.

PROPOSALS FOR BERLIN

Soviet Note on German Problem

The Soviet proposals for Berlin were contained in three separate notes, one addressed to the governments of the USA, Britain and France; another addressed to the West German government and a third addressed to the government of the German Democratic Republic. There were differences in detail between these three notes, but the main line of the proposals was the same in all three. Here are the main points from the Soviet note handed to the Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic on November 27th:

In order to make a proper approach to the question of Berlin it is necessary to recall historical developments during the post-war period. As a result of these developments two separate and independent German states have arisen, states which are internationally recognised and which have for some years played an international role as independent sovereign states. This makes the retention of any form of occupation of Germany an anachronism which has today no meaning or justification.

The retention of such an occupation regime in Berlin is today absurd from the standpoint of political logic or healthy common sense; it is also extremely unjust to the German people and especially to the German Democratic Republic, of which Berlin is the capital. The Soviet government, which has deep respect for the sovereign rights of the German people, finds it impossible to maintain any kind of connection with the occupation regime in Berlin; it intends to take all measures necessary to end this regime.

The USA, Great Britain and France have already forfeited all legal and moral justification for staying in Berlin, since they have seriously violated the Potsdam Agreement and other Four-Power agreements which were concluded during and immediately after the war with the aim of ending German militarism for all time and ensuring a peaceful and democratic development for Germany. It is sufficient to recall such facts as the inclusion of the German Federal Republic in the aggressive North Atlantic Pact and the equipment of the West German army with American nuclear and rocket weapons.

It would only be possible to talk of any rights of the three western powers based on inter-allied agreements if the USA, Britain and France were to change their German policy radically and to put an end to the fateful remilitarisation of Germany and its membership of NATO. Such a step by the western powers would accord with the spirit of the inter-allied agreements on Germany and would provide a practical basis for a rapprochement between the two German states on the lines of the proposals made by the German Democratic Republic for the establishment of a German confederation. The Soviet Union would support such a development as the only practical way to re-establish German unity. If the western powers, under present conditions, retain their role as occupation forces in Berlin, this is simply an unscrupulous attempt to utilise for their own ends the remnants of agreements which they themselves have long since violated.

(The Soviet note then formerly gave notice that it considers invalid the inter-allied agreements on occupation zones in Germany and the control mechanism for Germany, concluded on September 12th 1944 and May 1st 1945.)

In accordance with its principle of complete respect for the sovereignty of the German Democratic Republic the Soviet government intends to hand over to the German Democratic Republic all functions which were temporarily carried out by Soviet authorities under the above-mentioned inter-allied agreements and the September 20th 1945 agreement between the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. This means that the German Democratic Republic will in future exercise within its territory its sovereignty on the land, water and in the air. All contacts will cease between Soviet representatives in Germany and the corresponding representatives of the three western powers on questions connected with the occupation of West Berlin. It is also planned to dissolve the Soviet military Kommandatura in Berlin and to withraw its guard troops from the city.

The Soviet government plans to carry out its measures to liquidate the occupation regime in Berlin within six months so that the Western powers can prepare themselves for the change in the situation in Berlin.

The Soviet government considers that negotiations between government delegations of the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic should be held to investigate thoroughly questions arising from this situation. If the German Democratic Republic agrees with this proposal a date can be fixed for such negotiations.

The Soviet Union raises the question of ending the occupation regime in West Berlin since it does not correspond to the present situation and reduces the rights of the German people. The Soviet government believes that the most correct and normal step would be to unite the western part of Berlin, now occupied by the USA, Britain and France, with the eastern democratic sector, so that the entire city would be under the sovereignty of the German Democratic Republic and would be its capital.

The Soviet Union would greet such a solution. Under present conditions, however, it must be admitted that great difficulties are involved, particularly since during the post-war years the political and economic development of the West sectors of Berlin, conditioned by the existence of the occupation regime, proceeded differently from that in

the German Democratic Republic and East Berlin.

The unrealistic attitude of the USA, Great Britain and France towards the German Democratic Republic also hinders the solution of the Berlin question along the above-mentioned lines.

Taking these points into consideration and guided by the wish that the process of liquidating the occupation regime be carried out without inconvenience for the population of West Berlin and without a painful breach in the existing order there, the Soviet government proposes the solution of the Berlin question through giving West Berlin the status of a demilitarised, free city in whose internal affairs no state, not excluding the two German states, has the right to interfere. West Berlin should for its part undertake to forbid any kind of enemy or sabotage activity against the German Democratic Republic and other states.

This status for West Berlin would have to be recognised in binding form by the four powers who were concerned in the administration of Berlin after the war, and by the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic. The United Nations Organisation could also be concerned in some form or another in the maintenance of this status.

In proposing this free city status for West Berlin — about which the government of the German Democratic Republic had previously been informed — the Soviet government fully realises that the active cooperation of the German Democratic Republic will be required, amongst other things, to ensure trade and passenger transport communications between West Berlin and the outer world, since this is absolutely necessary for the normal life of industrial West Berlin, with its more than two million inhabitants.

The Soviet Union is prepared to do its utmost to see that the economy of the independent West Berlin develops normally, without difficulties or disturbances, so that the living standard of the people of West Berlin not only does not sink but rises steadily, and all can live a normal, calm life in the free city. The Soviet Union would not only strictly respect the new status of Berlin, but would also take on definite commitments to supply the city with orders and to deliver the necessary raw materials and foodstuffs on a commercial basis.

The Soviet government believes that such a solution of the Berlin question which takes the actual political situation into account would be an important step towards normalising the situation in Berlin and all over Germany. The acceptance of a free city status for West Berlin would in fact solve the following three problems:

a. It would end the unjustified foreign occupation regime in West Berlin and return the old capital of Germany entirely to the Germans.

b. It would end the misuse of West Berlin as a centre for all kinds of espionage, diversionist and sabotage activities against the German Democratic Republic and other socialist countries.

The Soviet Union, as ally of the German Democratic Republic, is particularly interested in this question since it maintains, under the Warsaw Treaty, certain contingents of its armed forces in the territory of the German Democratic Republic for the protection of both states.

c. One of the most dangerous centres of international tension would be removed; this would considerably reduce the danger of a new war in Europe. The free city of Berlin could also be a factor in normalising relations between the two German states; as a centre of peaceful and fruitful contacts between East and West Germany it could take a first step in a gradual approach to reunification, a cause actively supported by the German Democratic Republic.

The Soviet government is of course fully conscious that acceptance by the German Democratic Republic of a free city status for West Berlin in the centre of the German Democratic Republic would on its part be a great concession in the interests of peace in Germany and Europe and in the national interests of the entire German people. This noble action on the part of the German Democratic Republic would without doubt be appreciated and lauded by German patriots from the Oder to the Rhine, from the Baltic to the Bavarian Alps.

. . . The Soviet government will regard any attacks by German militarists and revenge-seekers or their allies on the frontiers or on the security of the German Democratic Republic or of any other country with which it is allied as an attack on the USSR and on all the Warsaw Treaty states.

There need be no doubt that if any hot-heads should decide to take aggressive action against the German Democratic Republic or other socialist countries allied with it they would immediately be effectively checked. The Soviet government has drawn attention to this in its notes to the governments of the USA, Great Britain and France.

A copy of the note to the government of the USA is appended herewith for the attention of the government of the German Democratic Repblic.

Grotewohl Welcomes Note

Otto Grotewohl, Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic, officially welcomed the new Soviet proposals in a statement issued on November 28th.

Prime Minister Grotewohl stated: "In its notes, the Soviet Government has shown a practical method of ending the unhealthy situation whereby West Berlin is a centre of tension and conflicts which have their effect all over Europe.

"We welcome the proposal of the Soviet Union that the occupation regime in Berlin should be ended, thus contributing to a normalisation of the situation in Berlin.

"There can be no doubt that the whole of Berlin lies on the territory of the German Democratic Republic . . . The Government of the German Democratic Republic is situated in Berlin. Berlin is linked in the closest manner by historical, economic and political bonds with the territory which today forms the German Democratic Republic . . .

"The creation of a West Berlin Free State . . . will help the relaxation of tension in Germany, and a rapprochement between the two German states. It could, in fact, be the first step towards the reunification of Germany."

Young African State Signs First Agreement With Democratic Germany

The German Democratic Republic has become the first state in the world to conclude an international agreement with the young African Republic of Guinea. The new state of Guinea declared its independence from France on October 2nd, after it had voted overwhelmingly against De Gaulle in the plebiscite of September 28th.

On November 17th representatives of the two states signed agreements on trade, culture, and the exchange of trade delegations in Conakry, capital of Guinea. The agreements were signed for the German Democratic Republic by Carl Eckloff, Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade, and for Guinea by Louis Lansana Beavogui, Minister of Economy and Planning.

Under the agreements, Democratic Germany will send technicians and scientists to Guinea, and will provide training facilities for students and skilled workers from Guinea in the German Democratic Republic.

Here is the text of the official communique issued in Conakry on November 17th:

"The negotiations were conducted in an extremely friendly atmosphere, and the two sides agreed to cooperate in the field of trade and culture, and to exchange trade delegations.

"In the framework of the cultural agreement the two governments have laid the foundation for lasting and fruitful cooperation in the fields of technical aid and cultural exchange. The German Democratic Republic has pledged itself in particular to make available to the Republic of Guinea technicians and scientists in accord with its wishes, and to offer to students and technicians from Guinea the chance of improving their qualifications at the universities and in the factories of the German Democratic Republic. In addition the two countries agreed that they will use the press, radio and other methods of information to create mutual understanding for their problems.

"The trade agreement provides the framework for the exchange of goods between the two countries: in the first place the German Democratic Republic shall provide industrial products such as textiles, small machines, chemical products and various consumer goods; the Republic of Guinea shall provide bananas, coffee, oil-seed and other agricultural products.

"These agreements demonstrate the great possibilities for cooperation between an industrial state and a young independent state which has freed itself of colonial domination, if the principles of national sovereignty, equal rights and mutual advantage are respected. The agreements also make a valuable contribution to stabilising the Republic of Guinea, and thereby a contribution to the whole liberation struggle of the African peoples.

"The two governments have concluded this agreement in the conviction that it is a contribution to strengthening peace, and to the struggle of the peoples for their free self-determination."

Trade Delegation in Irak

A permanent trade delegation of the German Democratic Republic in Irak was opened in Bagdad during November. The trade delegation has full consular rights, and can issue visas, etc. A permanent Iraki delegation in Berlin is expected to be opened shortly. The establishment of permanent delegations with consular powers was provided for in the trade agreement concluded between the two countries on October 26th.

SET A WAR CRIMINAL TO CATCH A WAR CRIMINAL

The question of the re-employment of nazi judges in responsible positions in West Germany was raised in the British House of Commons on November 17th by Mr Arthur Lewis, Labour M.P. for West Ham. Documents published by the Committee for German Unity in East Berlin have shown that at least 600 nazi judges and public prosecutors who were personally concerned in the infliction of death and other heavy sentences under nazi laws are now practicing again in West Germany. As the result of an earlier parliamentary question on the subject in July 1957, the West German Government promised investigations, and Mr Lewis asked the result of these investigations.

Mr Ian Harvey, Conservative Under-secretary of the Foreign Office replied: "This questions was discussed most recently with the German authorities on November 17th. The Foreign Secretary understands that the Federal and Laender Ministers of Justice have agreed to set up a central authority to coordinate the investigation and prosecution by the Laender judicial authorities of crimes committed during the Nazi period. The Ministers of Justice of the Laender are at present in process of organising this authority."

Political circles in Berlin commented that this answer completely avoided the issue. Under the pressure of public opinion, the West German judicial authorities have finally got around, more than 13 years after the war, to talking about the establishment of a central authority to coordinate action on nazi crimes, but even if this central authority is finally established it appears unlikely to take any action against the nazi judges. The reason for this view is the fact that the Federal and provincial (Laender) Ministries of Justice are themselves honeycombed with men who served as judges and prosecutors in the nazi "Special Courts", men who are unlikely to file charges against themselves.

Here are particulars on some of these individuals who are now

charged with the task of investigating nazi war crimes:

Dr Dreher, today Ministerial Director in the Federal Ministry of Justice. In the nazi period he was senior public prosecutor in the Special Court in Innsbruck, occupied Austria. In this capacity he conducted the case against Anton Rathgeber, accused of offences against the fascist "special laws". Rathgeber was executed on June 8th 1944.

Dr Bogenrieder, today Ministerial Director in the Baden-Wurttemberg Provincial Ministry of Justice. Under Hitler he was senior public prosecutor in Stuttgart Special Court. He conducted the case against Franz Guttenberg, accused of offences against the fascist "special laws". Guttenberg was executed on December 7th 1944.

Dr Dinkelacker, today Senior Governmental Councillor in the Baden-Wurttemberg Provincial Ministry of Justice. Under Hitler he was judge in Stuttgart Special Court. He passed death sentences on the Dutch citizen Adrianus Andshearn (executed on October 25th 1944) and the Czech citizen Jaroslav Valenta (executed on December 7th 1944) for offences against the fascist "special laws".

Dr Werner Rhode, today Senior Governmental Councillor in the Schleswig-Holstein Provincial Ministry of Justice. Under Hitler he was public prosecutor at the Special Court in Prague, occupied Czechoslovakia. He conducted the cases against at least 25 Czechoslovak resistance fighters, all of whom were sentenced to death and executed.

Dr Gabrysch, today Provincial Court Judge, employed in the Lower Saxony Provincial Ministry of Justice. Under Hitler he held the rank of captain in the SS, and acted as public prosecutor in Maribor, occupied Yugoslavia. He is named under No. A-16/1066 on the official Yugoslav War Criminal List.

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The West German Ministry of Justice announced on November 21st that it had no intention of making any investigations as a result of the questions asked in the British House of Commons.

FROM JAIL CELL TO NATO

The Strange Career of General Foertsch

One of Hitler's generals who served a long sentence for war crimes has just taken over a key post at NATO headquarters in Fontainebleau, France.

General Friedrich Albert Foertsch, ex-convict, was appointed at the end of November to the post of NATO Deputy Chief of Staff for Planning and Policy. He succeeds British Air Marshal Sir Hugh Constantine.

General Foertsch, professional officer born in 1900, served throughout the Second World War as a general staff officer of the nazi 18th Army on the eastern front. Hitler awarded him the "Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross" on September 15th 1944.

At the end of the war he was captured by Soviet troops and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment as a war criminal, after a trial at which he was found guilty of murdering and deporting Russian civilians, and a number of other crimes.

In September 1955, under the terms of an agreement between West Germany and the Soviet Union, all German war criminals still serving sentences in the Soviet Union were released and returned to Germany. Commenting on this agreement, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchov stated at that time: "Time passes and people change, some for the better and some for the worse. Most people change for the better, however. That is why we think it possible to accede to the request to release these people before the expiry of their sentences . . . These people have a considerable term of imprisonment behind them, and we hope they will have undergone a change for the better."

General Foertsch was one of the war criminals thus released. He immediately applied for re-integration in the new West German Wehrmacht, and was taken on again in his old rank. Now this convicted criminal is Deputy Chief of Planning for NATO.

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Immediately after being captured by the Soviet Army in May 1945, General Foertsch had a conversation with the Soviet General M. Popov. The Soviet general gave some details of this conversation in an article in the Moscow newspaper "Krasnaya Zvyezda" on October 23rd this year. Here is a short extract from this article:

"On May 10th 1945 I met Foertsch in his comfortable command post . . . 'Have you now abandoned your fruitless dreams of acquiring living space in the East?' I asked him. 'It is impossible to speak of such things any more' he replied. 'If we, the Germans, should ever rise again and become a state, I shall forbid myself, and my children too, even to think of a campaign against Russia'.

"That was Foertsch's answer in 1945. One asks oneself; has he lost his memory? No, he was simply lying. He had served Hitler with enthusiasm, and now he is serving NATO with enthusiasm, preparing for a war against the Soviet Union.

"Has he really forgotten what happened to his last campaign? It is an extraordinary case of loss of memory. He escaped lightly for his crimes with a prison term of only ten years, but this should have given him plenty of opportunity to ponder on the fall of Hitlerite Germany.

"He has understood nothing and learned nothing. He should be reminded often of May 1945, of the villages of Peltchi and Masheikyai (destroyed by Foertsch), of the 300,000 German officers and soldiers whom he led into captivity, and of the court which sentenced him."

Blind-Eye Nutting

"Mr Arthur Lewis (Labour, West Ham North) asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he was aware that many of the officers and advisers responsible for the organisation of the new German Army had Nazi and anti-democratic backgrounds; whether he would make it a condition of ratification of the agreements that . . . General Hans Speidel . . . should be barred from holding any office because of Nazi background.

"Mr Nutting (Parliamentary Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs) – The answer to both parts of the question is 'No'."

("The Times", London, February 1st 1955)

TEN YEARS LATER

The Story of an East Berlin School Class

Nearly everybody has a picture something like this tucked away somewhere in a drawer, a picture of their school class. The children in this picture may look a little shabbier, or a little thinner than they do on your school photo, since the picture was taken in the 2nd Elementary School in Weissensee, an eastern suburb of Berlin, in 1948, when life was still very hard in Germany.

Ten years later — the children are about eighteen now — they came together, nearly all of them, for a class reunion. They are no longer shabby or undernourished, and on these pages we present some of their pictures and stories, a cross section of the young generation in Democratic Germany.

But first a flash-back to the early post-war days in the school. It had been severely damaged in an air-raid in February 1945, and only a few class rooms were usable. The school worked in two shifts, for lack of room and lack of teachers: some children could not come to school because they had no shoes: others stayed away to trade on the black market, often earning more in a day than the teacher in a month.

What has become of the children who had such a doubtful start in life?

1. Sibylle

In her class she was known as "fidgety Sibylle". After leaving school at 14 she studied for two years at a trade school. Now she works in the "Holiday Department" of the East Berlin Transport Authority, making the holiday arrangements for the 8000 bus drivers and ticket collectors. In her spare time she is active in the jazz music group of the youth club near her home.

2. Christa

At school Christa always had good marks for conduct, and she is just as polite today as shop assistant as she was as a school girl. After leaving school she started to work in a private shop, but soon transferred to the Co-op, where she had more chance of learning her trade and earning promotion. Christa is not quite satisfied with her present work. "I should like to study for something else — perhaps I shall take a course in window-dressing. Or I should like to be a branch manager: that would be grand."

3. Monika

She was one of the very best in the class, and passed her exams with distinction. After elementary school she went on and continued her education at high school. Now she is carting pickled herrings around in a wholesale depot; but this will not be

her life work; it is only part of her practical training in the wholesale branch of trade. She is studying to qualify herself for work in foreign trade; she already speaks good French and Russian, and at evening classes she is studying English and Spanish.

4. Doris

Doris went on from elementary school to high school, and her favourite subjects were biology and Latin. They are a great help in the profession she has chosen — dispensing chemist. After two years apprenticeship she will go on to the School of Pharmacology in Leipzig (with a generous stipend, of course) for two years of theoretical study, and a concluding practical year in a chemist's shop.

5. Marianne

Marianne always loved sports at school, and the picture here shows her practicing parachute jumping. After matriculating from high school she went to work in the Central Office for weights and measures. Here she is studying physics, and tackling such problems as measuring one millimetre with a tolerance of $10^{-6} = (\quad 1 \quad) = \overline{(100{,}000{,}000)}$. She hopes to qualify after two years more study as a measuring technician.

6. Renate

Renate loved maths at school, and in addition she was group leader of the "Young Pioneers", the children's organisation. Next year she will be going to the Institute for Economics in Berlin-Karlshorst to study to become a statistician. In the meantime she is doing a year of practical work in the nationally owned "Stern" Radio Works in Weissensee. In the picture you see her punching resistance springs for new radio sets. When she is not posing for the photographer her hair is safely tucked inside her cap, in accordance with safety regulations.

7. Elvira

Elvira does not appear on the group picture, since she came to the school after it had been taken. She left school at 14 and went to work in the offices of the Berlin Transport Authority. In her spare time she practices long distance running, and so successfully that she finished second in the Berlin Cross-Country Championships. Her goal in work is to become a qualified interpreter, and she will soon leave her office work to go to the Worker's amd Peasant's Faculty of the University. Here she will study up to university standard in a compressed two year course before going on to university proper. A generous stipend will mean that she can complete her studies free of financial worry.

8. Dieter

When he left school in 1953, he was rather backward, and could not take his final exams. He went to work as an unskilled labourer, but he went to evening school, and soon managed to catch up. Now he is working as a mechanic in the big Treptow Electrical Works, and at evening school he has started on a course which will take hin up to matric standard. When he is not in evening school he is putting in a lot of voluntary work in the Building Cooperative run by his factory: his aim is to earn an apartment of his own by 1960.

The young people described on these pages are not a selection of model pupils: they are just a few of the hundreds of thousands who have taken advantage of the opportunities opened up for them in the German Democratic Republic.

(based on an article by Gisela Malik)

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

Does anybody today remember all the big words spoken between 1950 and 1954, when the question of establishing new West German armed forces was still under discussion? West German politicians did not tire of proclaiming that it was going to be a new sort of democratic army, freed of all the stains of past German militarism: I am sorry to have to recall that some British Labour Party speakers joined in the chorus.

In the meantime, of course, we have seen the re-installation of a large proportion of Hitler's top-ranking officers: GERMAN REPORT has given plenty of details in the past. Today, we should like to draw to your attention to a minor but significant incident which occurred on November 20th at a West German naval base on the Baltic. Herr Beermann, a leading member of the West German Social Democratic Party, had been asked to address a meeting of West German naval officers arranged by a Protestant Church organisation. Herr Beermann posed the question as to whether the time had not now come for the West German navy to rehabilitate Reichpietsch and Koebis, two Social Democratic sailors of the Imperial Navy who were shot in 1917 for calling for an end to the war.

A naval officer present at the meeting exclaimed that for reasons of discipline it was impossible to rehabilitate "mutineers". Herr Beermann replied that for him Reichpietsch and Koebis were much more honourable figures than the nazi admirals Doenitz and Raeder, who had supported Hitler's persecution of the Jews. Whereupon the overwhelming majority of the naval officers rose indignantly and stalked out of the meeting.

A comment really seems unnecessary. I should just like to add the information, however, that Reichpietsch and Koebis are the heroes of a successful film recently made in Democratic Germany, and that their pictures and the story of their fight against war are prominently featured in the history books used in the schools here. Admirals Doenitz and Raeder are mentioned in the school books too: as the war criminals that they were.

Our favourite story of the year appeared in the American newspaper "Syracuse Herald-Journal" on October 14th. Here it is:

"If one needs a dramatic example of the difference between the two Berlins, the flourishing West under free enterprise and the dreary, depressed East under Soviet control, here it is: the Berlin Hilton's storage room for empty bottles, until they are carted away, is bigger than an apartment on Stalinallee in the Communist sector two miles distant."

After reading this interesting contribution to the peaceful competition between east and west, we asked our special correspondent for paranormal psychology what he thought about it. His first answer came like a cannon shot: "How many beans make five?", but we were not satisfied, so we sent him out, armed with a tape measure, to make an on-the-spot study.

The total window space of American hotel-magnate Hilton's new West Berlin caravanserai, he reported some hours later, covers a larger area than the stage of the East Berlin opera house; the Hilton hotel's ground floor men's room is bigger than an East Berlin tram; and Mr Hilton has engaged a special team of midgets to act as pages: these midgets are much taller than any East German midgets.

We expressed some doubts about the last item, but gave our special investigator a special bonus for his sterling work in showing the great advantages of the free western world. Fingering the coins, he said ruminatively: "The money they use in the Hilton hotel is much shinier."

After all this fun and games, it seems rather a pity to pull out the rug from under the original story in the "Syracuse Herald-Journal" but in the interests of truth in journalism this seems to be necessary.

One day after writing the opening paragraphs of this notebook, I found myself, by a series of odd coincidences, eating lunch with Mr Curt R. Strand, the general manager of the Berlin Hilton Hotel. After lunch we went to have a look at the notorious empty-bottle room, and I was sadly disappointed, for I had expected something on the Texan scale. In fact the room is pretty small, only about one-third of the size of the average apartment on East Berlin's Stalin Allee. Said Mr Strand: "scarcely any room at all; I don't know what we are going to do with all our empty bottles."

But while we are on the subject of hotels, I must remark that the new American-style hotel is really beautifully designed, down to the last detail. East Berlin is still pretty short of hotels, but some new ones are now planned; I hope that the planners go and have a look at this West Berlin showplace and get some ideas.

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